



**TESTIMONY TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON RAISED BILL S.B. 948, AN ACT ADDRESSING
EDUCATION FUNDING AND RACIAL EQUITY**

Jamilah Prince-Stewart, Executive Director, FaithActs for Education

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Co-Chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Sanchez, Ranking Members Senator Berthel and Representative McCarty, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is Jamilah Prince-Stewart and I am executive director of FaithActs for Education. We are people of faith building power to get our children the education they deserve.

We believe that every child deserves the opportunity to graduate from college, take care of their family, and fulfill their God-given potential. We build relationships, we build leaders, and we build power through community organizing and civic engagement. We were founded in Bridgeport and are expanding to Hartford and New Haven. We are 80 churches, 500 members, 4500 committed voters, and 11,000 congregants strong.

Thank you for providing this opportunity to speak in favor of SB 948, An Act Addressing Education Funding and Racial Equality.

Yes.

Please.

Pass it.

Now.

Do not wait.

Make history.

Change Black and Brown lives.

Forever.

A few weeks ago I stood with many of you and your colleagues on the freezing cold steps outside the Capitol.



We were there to launch our Education Justice Now campaign, to call for an end to Connecticut's racist and classist school funding formula.

And I'm here to say now is the time.

This bill will:

- Open the door to more kids by making the definition of concentrated poverty more reflective of how people live. The current formula doesn't cover Bridgeport, New Haven and New Britain, which are high poverty districts with tremendous numbers of high-need Black and Brown students.
- Increase the extra funds districts receive for students who are English Language Learners. This will help improve the support these children need.
- Equitably fund low-income Black and Brown children who attend schools of choice (magnet, charters, and vocational technical schools) – all of which are public schools without disinvesting in traditional public schools.
- End the phase-in for the funding. Right now, a 5th grader won't see the full effect until she finishes high school.

The current funding formula is racist and classist funding.

On Park Avenue in Fairfield County, a school educating a Bridgeport child receives roughly \$14,000 for their education, while a Fairfield child receives roughly \$19,000.

In the same city a charter school student receives roughly \$11,000.

There is a \$640 million dollar gap between the way Connecticut funds education for white students and students of color.

We don't need another court case, study or task force to tell us how unjust this is. It's criminal. It's immoral.

Now I know some people in the Capitol will say this is an expensive proposition. That Connecticut doesn't have the money to pay for this.

I don't buy it. The cost of funding educational justice for all our children pales in comparison to the dollars spent today and tomorrow on prisons, poverty, homelessness, hunger and social services.

What would you rather pay for? Broken systems that make it so people can live poor ... or the schools and tools that can equip our children to rise up out of poverty.



Connecticut has a \$20 billion budget. Funding education is not expensive. Prisons are expensive. Poverty is expensive. Dreams deferred are expensive. And we are paying with our lives.

When policymakers tell us we need to wait or there's not enough money, I am reminded of what Dr. King said of those who "prefer a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice ... who paternalistically believe they can set the timetable for another man's freedom...."

We will not wait for freedom any longer. We're calling on every leader in this state to do right by our children and to do right by Connecticut. We demand Education Justice Now!

We're incredibly grateful for SB 948. It shows we have champions in the Legislature who are willing to stand up and do what's right for our children. Now let's work together and get this across the finish line this legislative session. Our children can't afford to wait any longer.

Thank you.

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